

Miscellaneous Department.
THE LITTLE ABOLITIONIST.
By the Author of "THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A FEMALE SLAVE."
[Written for the National Anti-Slavery Standard.]

CHAPTER I.

THE next day the house was thrown into an agreeable confusion by the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Berker. They were daughters from Louisiana. They were delightedly received. Now, Mrs. Berker was the very incarnation of pride and prejudice—so haughty that she despised the ground upon which she trod. Here was one of those still, pale faces, cold as a northern iceberg. You could not believe that the sun would shine into such a face; the eyes were blue and spiritless. Yet Mrs. Berker had been a belle and still called a beauty. All the haughtiness of the family seemed to have cropped out in her. She had been regarded by some as a superior personage, one to whom tribute should be paid. As a natural right she received and exacted admiration. Cold and selfish, she was yet worshipped by all. The marriage with Mr. Berker had been a purely mercenary one. His sugar plantation, with its six hundred negroes, its stately mansion and beautiful grounds, had dazzled her ambitious eye, and no her hand was given to a man for whom she had scarcely an ordinary respect; for, with all her coldness, she was a woman of fine and cultivated taste. Loving the outward beautiful, she could not be other than displeased with her husband, who was only a broad, genial, good-natured Southerner—killing his hours away upon the verandah, reading the newspapers of morning and doing the afternoon through. He was rigid and strict in the plantation regulations, always employing the severest overcares and requiring from them a close and strict report of duty. Business aside, he was a merry joking; a hospitable and genial host, at whose table the richest wines and best viands were always found; but the coarseness of an originally vulgar nature glanced out almost at every sentence. This was particularly revolting to Mrs. Berker, who would, if possible, "gild refined gold."

Maggie Berker, a short, fat girl of sixteen, was very like her father in appearance and disposition, frank, honest and full of fun. Sunny and bright in temper as the beautiful child which gave her birth, there were bright points of character that challenged admiration with every look. As she bounded and sported before us, we thought of the flowers and pomegranates of her native South—when, on a sudden, a sharp word would flash forth biting and a serpent's tooth.

Mary was still, proud and unsympathetic as her mother, and possessed of a most marvellous voice. A pure, dead-white complexion, white and bloodless as unseasoned snow—large, dreamy, blue eyes, that opened heavily, slowly, as if they dreaded to encounter some unpleasant sight, while the long, curling lashes swept the polished cheek with a graceful shadow. A cloud of raven ringlets brushed and floated over the unrivalled whiteness of her neck and shoulders. These sisters were the only children, the inheritors of their father's princely wealth, and of course "sister Catherine's children" were great pets in the family, allowed to do whatever they pleased, to rush with a heavy foot over everything and every one. Miss Maggie drove the horses four in hand, and crushed pleasure out of every moment. It was amusing to see her running about over the house, playing pranks upon every one she met.

"Now, cousin Clara, don't look stiff—that's just like me and Mary. I'm so tired of sitting up straight and playing lady. I can do as I please, ma says, for a little while; I don't come out until next season. Where is the swing and the skipping-ropes?" and away she fled in search of them before taking off her bonnet or pelisse.

Mrs. Berker looked after her with a smile—

"Poor Maggie, she will never be other than a child."

Mary sat up quietly and demurely as a woman of thirty.

"And how is Sally?" inquired Mrs. Berker.

"I am afraid she is falling fast. She looks very pale and this," replied Mrs. Mannors.

"I think, aunt Catherine, that general weakness is all her complaint," put in the meeking Clara.

"Why, dear!" exclaimed the mamma, well-pleased with this essay of her daughter's.

Mamma had carefully put Sally to bed and sat watching beside her, when Mrs. Mannors sent up to know if Sally felt well enough to see her aunt Berker.

"Now," said mamma, "dear child, you must look very prettish when Miss Catherine comes, keep your face as orful proud and think nobody's pretty as her children. Umph! I wonder if she thinks her Maggie'll compare long with you? I doesn't even think that pale-faced Miss Mary is as pretty as you. Why, pshaw! that girl haint no life in her; jist sits up like a doll, and ain't no more count. But here, hussy, let me smooth your hair and put on this pretty lace cap. Laws, now, you jist looks like angel," and she arranged the bed-covering, placed a bouquet near, and went about setting things in order generally.

Sally smiled at her mamma's pride and interest, and her eyes moved anxiously after her as she busied herself about the room.

Mrs. Berker was coldly kind to her niece, even condescended to kiss her, which was a good deal for the ice-queen. Maggie was demonstrative in her greeting; Mary was cold and collected as her mother. Sally talked to them, but felt all the time that there existed no tie of sympathy between them.

"Oh, cousin Sally, I'm sorry you are so sick, for I expected you and I would have so much fun. I was somebody to run and romp with me. I hate to be so prim and precise. Down on the plantation I cut up like a boy, and nobody dares interfere; but when mamma takes me up to the city, I have to behave myself and play lady. I hate it so. Hetty curls my hair, and worries me half to death with her fixing and fixing, and, after all, I am nothing but ugly Maggie Berker."

Sally was pleased with this—pleased to find her cousin unimpaired—so free and natural.

These girls, though they were sixteen and fourteen years of age, had never so much as undressed themselves; they had a servant to do everything; were utterly helpless. Hetty, the maid, did all for them; kept their clothes in order; washed and dressed them as if they had been babies. They would cry out, "Hetty, where are my gloves?" "Hetty, where is my bonnet?" and the girl was required to know where the missing articles were under penalty of punishment. And the effect of this cold, indifferent to themselves; proud, insolent and overbearing to servants.

One day, when Maggie cried out, "Hetty, get me those blue gloves or I'll knock you over," Sally ventured to say, "Dear, wouldn't it be more polite to say, Hetty, please get my gloves?"

"Please, to a servant, cousin Sally!"

"Why not, dear?"

"It would be so funny, Het wouldn't know how to answer."

"Please to a nigger," said Mary; "that would be capital order! Treat Hetty in that way, and she'd soon begin to think it was a favour rather than a duty she was bestowing."

"Well, isn't it a favour, dear?"

"Why, cousin Sally, you must be crazy to call the service of our slaves favours."

Sally talked to them a long time, but could make no impression upon their minds; and, when they repeated the conversation to their mother, she merely said,

"My dear, Sally's mind is much weakened by sickness. She is not accountable for what she says."

CHAPTER II.

AS Sally began to gain strength, they concluded to start upon their contemplated trip to Mrs. Oxford's splendid country seat, about fifteen miles from our village.

Mrs. Oxford was the Emily Morton whom we saw at the commencement of this story. She was now a wife and mother, and mistress of one of the finest establishments in the State. Her husband, a retired gentleman of fortune, devoted his waste and leisure time to the study of scientific agriculture. He had the finest specimen

stock—the best cultivated lands—and more of our boasted blue grass than any other farmer. Upon a small farm of three hundred acres, he employed one hundred negroes—who were, of course, half their time without work. But both Mr. and Mrs. Oxford rejoiced in having a number of slaves round them—a sort of baronial feeling. Besides, Mrs. Oxford was much like her niece, the Misses Berker, and had from her childhood required a close and attentive body-servant, who kept her wardrobe in order, carried her keys, &c., &c. The habits of her childhood seemed to increase with her years, so that at thirty-four she was as helpless as at twelve. She did nothing but lounge about the house, read novels and play with her children.

Now, as she came forward, accompanied by her favourite sister—Mrs. Goodwin—to meet and welcome her friends, we find but little change in her. She is still as fair and lovely; no trace of care or thought is on that face—it is as bright and sunny as when we first saw it—though "begirt by glowing infancy, and little busy voices breathe out 'mother' at almost every turn in the house."

"Dear sister Catherine," "My noble Clara," "My pretty Mary," "Sweet Maggie," "dear sister Mannors," winding up with "how do you do, Sally?" were Mrs. Oxford's greetings.

This quite insulted mamma, who thought that her dear invalid child should have had a warmer reception. She frowned about a good deal, muttering to herself, that "Miss Emily alters was so stiff and cross like, nobody ever loved her. She wasn't bit pretty, with her eyes lookin' like poor milk, and such whiteish hair."

There could have been no deeper insult to her than coldness to her child.

Sally was able to be a great deal in the parlour, and as she listened to her aunt's and cousin's talk, she was greatly disgusted and horrified to hear them telling of the cruelty practised on the plantation. Maggie spoke with the utmost indifference of the number of negroes that was killed during the busy sugar season by over-work. Mrs. Berker told, with the utmost sang froid, of the prompt manner in which they shot down negro men who were suspected of having part in a supposed insurrection. As may be imagined, this operated painfully upon Sally's heart. Her sensitive, nervous temperament could stand under it. But to Mrs. Oxford and Mrs. Goodwin, both of whom believed in the iron rule, and thought a negro no better than swine, this prompt and rigid discipline, as they termed it, was elegant. Sally resolved to absent herself from the parlour, where she heard such cruel talk, and used to be accompanied by mamma and sometimes by Maggie—wander over the beautiful farm, go down to the quarter and talk to the slaves. Once, when she had Maggie with her, they stopped at a little cabin, in front of which a woman was sitting engaged at her little spinning wheel, and singing very sweetly, one of those wild, Ethiopian ballads.

When they stopped, she got up and politely offered them stools. As Sally was weak and tired, she readily consented, but Maggie ran on, impatient of fun, saying, "I'll be back after while, cousin Sally."

"Is yer much sick, young miss?" asked the woman of Sally.

"Yes, I feel quite weak; my little exertion brings on my cough; and sometimes I spit blood."

"Oh, pity! does ever try slippery elm tea?"

"No, I have never."

"Would you let me make you a little?"

"Certainly, if you can spare the time."

"Oh, yes, ma'am; I'm most through my task, an' I'd like to make it for you, yer pears so weak like."

She went into the cabin and soon returned with a cup of the tea, which she hoped would "cure young miss's cough."

Sally tried it, and praised it very much.

"But you look weak and thin; are you sick?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am, I've allers sick. I've had the breast-complaint all my life."

"What do you take?"

"A little of the tea sometimes; but it is no matter," and the woman choked down a sigh, which was not perceived by Sally.

"What is your name?"

"Lucinda, ma'am."

"Are you married?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Does your husband live here?"

"No, ma'am; he was sold, about two years ago, down to river; I haven't heard from him since." She did not sigh nor shed a tear, but looked stony, deathly calm.

"Have you children?"

"Two."

"Where are they?"

"My eldest, Sam, is in the field at work. Jimmy, poor Jimmy, is playing somewhere."

"How old is Jimmy?"

"Four years, ma'am; and she sighed profoundly.

Just then a bright malatto boy, with large eyes and neatly dressed, came crawling up to the woman's side. She put out her hand and, looking fondly down, murmured, "poor Jimmy!"

He whined strangely.

"Can't he walk?" asked Sally.

"No, ma'am."

"And four years old?"

"Yes, ma'am."

The boy pulled at his mother's sleeve and cried out in a strange howl. She took a crust from her pocket, which appeared to satisfy him. He laid down close to her feet and began to whine piteously. As he rolled back and forward, Sally had a chance of seeing his face closely, and she became aware of his painful condition. The mother read it, and bowing her head, said,

"Yes, ma'am, he is not right."

"Was he always thus?"

"No, ma'am; until he was eighteen months old he was as bright a child as I ever saw. A pretty little fellow, too; played so pretty, and noticed everything." She wiped a single tear from her eye.

"What was the cause?"

"Oh, ma'am; oh, oh!" and the woman's frame quivered violently; the wheel stopped and Lucinda gave up to the luxury of a passionate burst of tears.

"Don't speak of it if it grieves you," added Sally.

"Yes, ma'am, I want to speak presently; it will do you good."

After a few moments silence, she began:

"When Jimmy was 'bout eighteen months old, he use to be allers crawlin' and playin' 'bout de yard; he was a nice little fellow, allers chirpin' like a bird. Once he crawled up to the house; was a playin' on the steps, where he found one of the big wax dolls that belonged to Miss Emily's oldest darter, Eliza. Well, you see my baby didn't know no better, he went to playin' long with it, let it fall and broke it; so Miss Eliza came long an' saw it. She picked my child up, and—and—flung him down then high steps. I was coming long and saw my God! I picked him up for dead; better he had been. I don't know nothing else that happened for a long time after; but my child had fever for weeks; and now you see him with no use of his limbs, and no sense in his head. He is hardly ever well; can't talk to me. Yet, he is all my life now, poor boy!"

Here the boy looked with that expressionless face at his mother; and, putting up his scrawny little hands, that looked like claws, began to wipe the tears from her eyes.

Sally had no words of comfort for sorrow such as this; but felt the steel going into her blood, and sharpening it against her own race. She asked her, in a husky voice, "What did aunt Eliza do? what did she say to Eliza?"

"Oh, she was sorry for it; but said Miss Eliza didn't mean to hurt him so bad. But, miss, the harm was done."

When Sally returned to the house, she felt a terrible oppression at her heart. The family thought she never looked better; her eyes were bright and her colour very rich. But Sally had symptoms which she too well understood. She knew that the damps which gathered on her brow, and the rushing blood that went splashing up to her face was too rapid for the natural course of health. And so that night, at twelve o'clock, when she woke, mamma, with a low, husky call, who knew that death was

coming. And the afflicted family read in her altered face the early doom.

"Oh, mamma," she murmured, when alone with that dearest friend, "if I could be spared only a little longer, that I might see justice done to you; that I might save a few of you from the torture of slavery."

"Never mind 'bout us, dear child; my ole heart is more troubled 'bout yers' you up then it is 'bout bein' a slave. I'd rather save out all my poor days than see your last hours made unhappy. If I jist could die long wid yer, for my last friend goes wid you; and the old woman wept bitterly."

Sally held her hand out to her; it was covered with kisses and tears.

The doctor came almost hourly, but pronounced her gone beyond all power of recovery.

"She is unwilling to die," said Mrs. Mannors.

"That is natural," answered the doctor, but I think she is fully aware of her condition.

As he was leaving, aunt Betty stole up and asked, in a hurried, husky tone,

"Doctor, is there any hope?"

"None, old aunty."

"How long will she last, doctor?"

"Only a few days."

The negro woman sank down upon the ground, and gave a groan that seemed to tear up the earth; to shatter and annihilate herself, her very life, reason and consciousness.

Only a few moments did she lay in that death-like trance, when she rose up a different creature. The face was hard as if cut out of iron; all softness, all love were gone; only the hard, rugged outline of feature left.

"What is the matter, mammy?" asked Sally, when she returned to the room.

"Nothing, baby." She had returned to the old habit of calling her baby.

"Give me my writing-desk, mammy? There, now, put your arms round me; let me lean against your breast, dear mammy, while I write the last, last words that these fingers will ever trace; there, now, that is very comfortable."

And so, supported by her old coloured mammy, held in those true, loving arms, Sally wrote a letter to be uncle. It was touching to see this old woman crushing down her tears, and trying to appear calm in the presence of her child.

"There, now, mammy, let me read you what I have written to uncle Mannors." And Sally read in a low, slow voice:

"DEAR UNCLE: You will not forget my last request to you. You will try to gratify me when I ask that you will give my poor people the liberty which they so well deserve, and which, had I lived long enough, should have been asked to them. Poor mammy has been faithful, a very mother to me; let me make what poor return I can for such kindness. Uncle, do this, and death will have no sting for me, and so I shall in dying bless you. SALLY MORTON."

"I am too weak to write more, mammy; but I hope all will be well with you."

Sally sealed the letter, and sank back exhausted upon her mammy's breast. What a grateful shower of tears rained down upon that sick girl's brow! Putting her arm round her mammy's neck, she drew the face close to her, and, as in her childhood, Sally kissed the lips of the coloured woman, without one thought of caste or race, and soon after fell softly and sweetly to sleep.

When the doctor came, he noted, with a practiced eye, that mysterious change which takes place in an hour, almost in a few moments, and, as he turned to Mrs. Mannors, said, "I will soon be over."

Sally moved uneasily, and, opening her eyes, asked for Mr. Mannors.

"Dear uncle, I am almost gone; here is a letter which I wish you to read after my death. And, oh! I charge you, do as I there beg you. Give my poor people their freedom. Make my good mammy happy, or as near so as possible. Will you promise this, uncle?"

He did promise her, in the most fervent manner, to do as she wished; promised her in the presence of the assembled family. Then, taking kindly leave of each member, she called for mammy to come close to her.

"Dear mammy, as a baby, I played and nestled in your bosom; now let me die there." And so Sally closed her eyes in that sweetest of sleeps upon the old nurse's breast!

The family were distressed; but Sally made only a small gap in their social world—twas but a moment's regret—the waters opened but to close again, and flash more brightly with star-beams and sunlight!

Quietly they laid her away in the cemetery of her fathers. Sweetly and lovingly her grave nestled down beside her mother's. There was a pompous and showy funeral. An ornate and brilliant sermon was preached by a minister of the regular church. The family and friends "wore black." And so poor Sally passed from their very memories. But the slaves—whom she loved and pitied—sorrowed over her. Mammy's heart was utterly broken; even the hope of freedom failed to animate her. How bitter and agonizing was her face, as she listened to the solemn reading of the funeral service at the grave! And when the last person, even the sexton, had left, she sank down beside that new-made grave, and wept like Rachel of old; her last child was gone and she refused all comfort. Across that moist mound she flung herself, and seemed to ask the very clouds for mercy!

Then came Lucinda, with her idiot boy on her breast. Her eyes were damp, and her arms were locked sadly around her boy.

"Poor young miss," she muttered, "she was so soft and sweet; and said such kind words to me."

Joe, too, was calmed down, and weepingly breathed out her highest eulogy.

"Miss Sally has gone to heaven; she was too good for this world."

Mr. Mannors kept his niece's letter for months, and often read it. But, then, when he talked with the family, he decided that Sally was too young, too impulsive to decide such a matter. And the dictate seemed to be that good homes and good masters should be found for the slaves whom Sally so loved.

"Yes, it is wise and best," exclaimed Mr. Mannors, as he cradled the letter in his hand, "it is better, and this poor, pitiful soul, which, I dare say, written at old Betty's request, had better be burnt." But he looked strangely, distrustfully at it as it flickered and blazed up in the grate. Like a fiery and forked tongue it seemed to hiss a rebuke and a curse against his treachery.

And aunt Betty—shall we tell the truth, and say that she was sold "down the river?" She went with the chain-gang to the dreary rice fields of the South.

The evening before leaving, she went to that grave, and saw far away to the only spots on earth that she held sacred, and there breathed out a wail, so touching and bitter, that it would have broken any heart but that which slavery had hardened.

The good, worthy and law-abiding Morton family still bless God that they are not as other people; that their slaves are "happy" around them; their family prosper, and the world gliding smoothly in its old, oily grooves. Should you chance to mention Sally to them, they shake their heads ominously and mutter: "A pity, a great pity; but she was only a weak, foolish 'Little Abolitionist'!"

THE END.

THE BEST MAN.

PASSING, the other evening, along a street which offered a short cut to the spot we wished to reach, we happened to look up a narrow court, and saw a fight in progress. There was nothing remarkable in the mere fact of a fight occurring in that spot. Indeed, the calm indifference with which a majority of the bystanders looked on conveyed the idea that fights were rather the rule than the exception there. We ventured to inquire of a bystander what it was all about.

The individual whom we addressed (apparently connected with the costermongering interest) seemed surprised at being inquired of in that manner. He informed us—sailing at first on simplicity—that there was no quarrel in the business at all; but, the combatants were, and ever been, the best of friends. The present contest was simply to decide the question as to which of the two was the best man.

We have already confessed our ignorance of pugilistic technicalities, and therefore do not mind running the risk of being laughed at by admitting that the explanation seemed a strange one. The term "best," try it whatever way we would, could not be brought to suggest to our mind any other meaning than the superlative of "good," the more greater or lesser goodness of two men could be decided thus, by fists, we were not able to conceive.

The stronger man we thought might be thus proved, or the more manly man, but how "the best?"

"How preposterously illogical!" we exclaimed, turning disgusted from the scene. "The idea of making knock-down blows a test of excellence! Judging of man's virtues or goodness by the power with which they use their fists! Well may we talk of the necessity of education."

Can there be anything more absurd? Yes, when my Lord This, and the Right Honourable Captain That, get up a fight between themselves, simply to decide which is the better man. For what is it when my lord seeks to prove his honour by discharging pistols at the gallant captain—who is it when the gallant captain endeavours to convince the world of his integrity by blowing into his lordship's brains, but a fight to prove which is the better man? The gentleman is no less logical in his proceeding than the costermonger; the only difference being, that the gentleman's tribunal is sometimes a more dangerous one to appeal to than the costermonger's.

A pistol-bullet through the head of him who has traced out his moral character, at any rate, it elevates him subject for the future. So, in like manner, if the injured party falls, you may be sure all recollection of the injury is completely blotted out from his mind. But a sound thrashing settles a disputed point of rival excellence almost as finally. The costermonger who is hopelessly defeated grants the superior merit of his adversary, and ever afterwards acknowledges him as the better man. True it is that the victorious pugilist may be a brutal husband, a more brutal father; a drunkard, a blasphemer, bad as a citizen, bad as a man—but he has gained the fight! His adversary may be his opposite in everything; and, until now, may have been thought a pattern to his neighbours; but then he got his head broken. No one denies his virtues; but the other is the better man. And so the slanders of the scholar, the scold, the scoundrel, and by superior skill to shoot the man he has wronged. Well, he has given satisfaction. His honour is secured. He is the better man.

So lately as until the beginning of this very nineteenth century of ours, it was the law that questions affecting men's character or property might be decided by hand combat. Before the year 1800, the Duke of Devonshire, George the Third, chapter forty-six, in the year of Grace one thousand eight hundred and nineteen, was it not written in the statute-book of England that any man might prove his innocence of crimes alleged against him, might establish his right to a disputed property, by fighting his adversary to the death? He might choose to fight on foot, or on horseback, with sword or with staff, or with any other weapon he pleased. And the victor was the better man.

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